

Chapter 3 – Housing

3. Introduction

Augusta's housing characteristics reflect the city's history and early development patterns. More recent trends indicate how and where housing development will occur in the future. Residential land uses cover approximately 28,000 acres at present. This includes a mix of single-family, site-built residences at various densities, duplexes, apartments, manufactured homes, and group quarters. Assessing the housing stock helps identify major housing problems, determine future housing needs, and develop a plan for managing housing development in the future.

3.1 Residential Development Patterns

Though both Augusta (1736) and Richmond County (1777) were founded in the eighteenth century, residential development patterns in Augusta were more urban than those in Richmond County until about 60 years ago. Initially settlement in the city occurred in close proximity to the Savannah River and nearby trading routes. As the city expanded to the south and west, neighborhoods developed in conjunction with the introduction of new modes of transportation (e.g. railroads) and manufacturing facilities (e.g. textile mills). In the twentieth century, Augusta annexed both incorporated places (Summerville) and unincorporated areas (e.g. Forest Hills, Highland Park), thereby adding a mix of older and newer housing to the existing stock.

Settlement patterns in Richmond County were more rural than Augusta until about the 1940s. From its founding the County was a largely agrarian area and residential development was centered on several small incorporated towns. These included Bath, Blythe, Mt. Enon, Hephzibah, and other towns located within the boundaries of what is now the Fort Gordon Military Reservation. Following World War II, suburban development began in earnest in Richmond County and continues to the present day. The character, age and condition of the housing stock thus reflect this trend and the expansion of commercial and industrial facilities that accompanied it.

3.2 Housing Unit Trends

Between 1990 and 2000, total housing units in Richmond County increased 6.5% to 82,312 units. This is lower than the 19% increase in units between 1980 and 1990 (see Table H-1). The number of units in Augusta nearly tripled, but this is a statistical anomaly reflecting the consolidation of Augusta and Richmond County in 1996. Nevertheless, Augusta accounts for 98% of all the housing units in Richmond County. Hephzibah and Blythe also recorded significant increases in total housing units, but part of the gain reflects annexations the two communities completed prior to consolidation.

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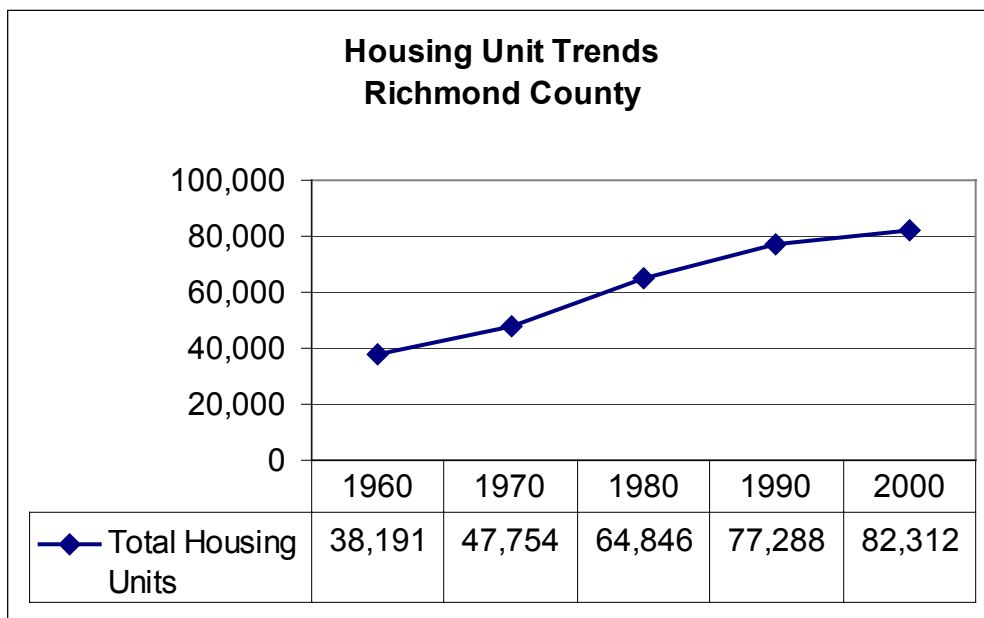
**Table H-1
Total Housing Units
Richmond County, Augusta, Hephzibah and Blythe**

			Change, 1990 – 2000	
	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Richmond County	77,288	82,312	5,024	6.5%
Augusta	21,588	80,481	58,893	272.8%
Hephzibah	935	1,570	635	67.9%
Blythe	125	261	136	108.8%
Unincorporated Area	54,640	0	(54,640)	(100.0%)

Note: Augusta and Richmond County consolidated on January 1, 1996.
Hephzibah and Blythe annexed land in unincorporated Richmond County prior to consolidation.

Sources: 1990 and 2000, U.S. Bureau of the Census

The chart below gives an impression of the county-wide trend in total housing units over the last 40 years.



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The map at the end of the chapter summarizes the net change in housing units between 1990 and 2000 within all forty census tracts. Geographically, total housing units increased the most in the southern and western parts of Richmond County during the decade. Notably, five of the six census tracts with the highest percentage increase in housing units are located in south Richmond County. Other tracts in the south and west also registered smaller housing unit gains. This continues a trend evident for several decades.

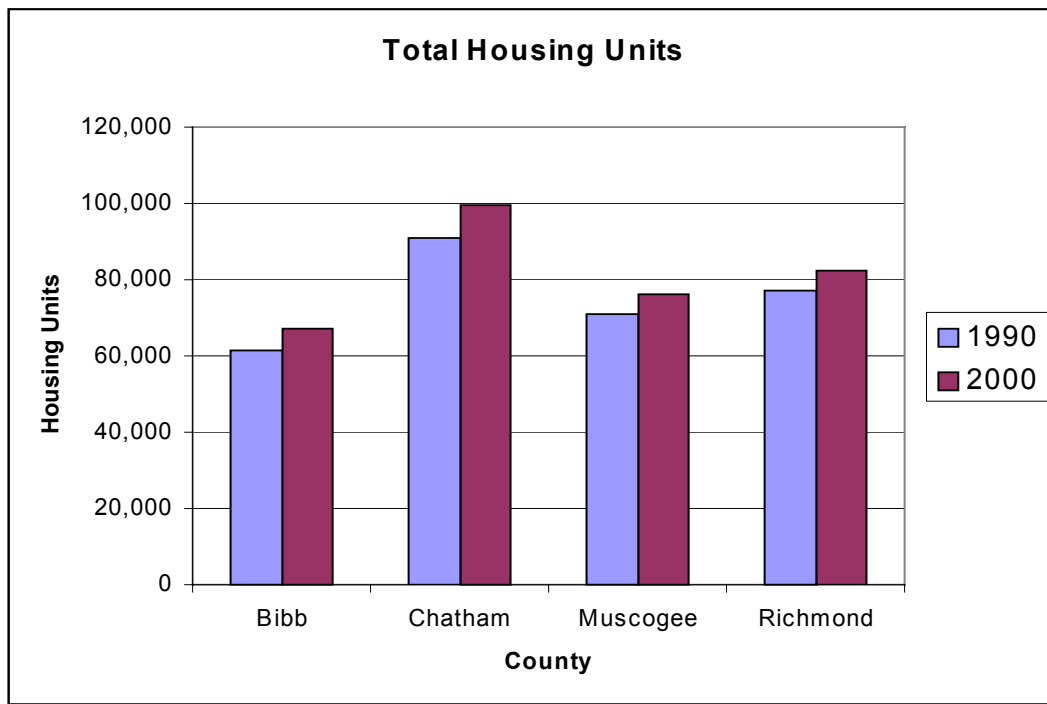
In contrast, most census tracts in or near the "old" city either recorded a decline in housing units or remained essentially unchanged from 1990. Of interest is the fact that areas encompassing some post-World War II subdivisions are beginning to experience a decline in housing units. Also of note is that downtown and adjacent areas registered an increase in housing units.

The number of housing units in Richmond County is increasing at a slower rate than in other parts of the metropolitan area. Table H-2 compares the numeric and percentage change in housing units for the Georgia counties in the MSA, the Augusta MSA and the state of Georgia during the 1990s. The table shows that the percent change in housing units was highest in suburban Columbia County. McDuffie County and the Augusta MSA were slightly lower than the statewide change in housing units. Richmond County was well below the state level change.

Table H-2 Housing Unit Trends Richmond, Columbia & McDuffie County, Augusta MSA and Georgia					
	Richmond County	Columbia County	McDuffie County	Augusta MSA	Georgia
Total Housing Units					
1990	77,288	21,841	7,270	158,342	2,638,418
2000	82,312	33,321	8,916	195,759	3,281,737
Percent Change 1990 - 2000	6.5%	52.6%	22.6%	23.6%	24.4%
Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, SF 1, 1990 and 2000					

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When compared to other Georgia counties with similar demographics, Richmond County’s relatively low change in housing units is not unusual. The chart below compares housing unit change in Richmond County with those of the three counties that are home to Macon, Savannah and Columbus. The chart indicates that all four counties recorded relatively modest increases in housing units during the decade.



The detached single-family, site-built home continues to be the dominant type of housing unit in the market, representing 61.5% of the total units in Richmond County in 2000. This is up slightly from a 60% share in 1990, but below the 71% share recorded in 1980. In the last twenty years a number of new apartment complexes have been built in Augusta. In addition, the aging of the population and growth in “empty-nester” and one-person households has increased the demand for attached and semidetached units on small lots. As a result, the number of attached, single-family units increased from 2,387 in 1990 to 3,088 in 2000 (+29%). Apartments (structures with 3 or more units) comprise almost 26% of the housing stock. Mobile or manufactured homes account for 9.2% of the housing units, about the same percentage as in 1990. Table H-3 lists the number of units by type of structure for 1990 and 2000.

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Table H-3 Units in Structure Richmond County, 1990 and 2000			
	1990	2000	Percent of 2000 Total
Total	77,288	82,312	100.0%
1, detached	46,022	50,586	61.5%
1, attached	2,387	3,088	3.8%
2	3,578	2,762	3.4%
3 or 4	5,138	5,243	6.4%
5 to 9	7,305	7,428	9.0%
10 to 19	3,323	2,208	2.7%
20 to 49	1,113	795	1.0%
50 or more	1,193	2,622	3.2%
Mobile home	6,537	7,580	9.2%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	692	0	0
Sources: 1990 and 2000, US Bureau of the Census Summary File 3A and SF 3 - Sample Data			

3.3 Housing Tenure

Currently 58% of the occupied housing units are owner-occupied. This is up slightly from the 56.4% rate in 1990. Since Augusta includes nearly 98% of all the housing units in Richmond County, the city's owner/renter split is almost identical to the county's mix. Owner-occupied units comprise nearly 80% of occupied units in both Hephzibah and Blythe. Prior to consolidation, a majority of the occupied units in Augusta were renter-occupied units. This characteristic had been a part of Augusta's housing marker for several decades, owing in part to the age of the housing stock and the concentration of

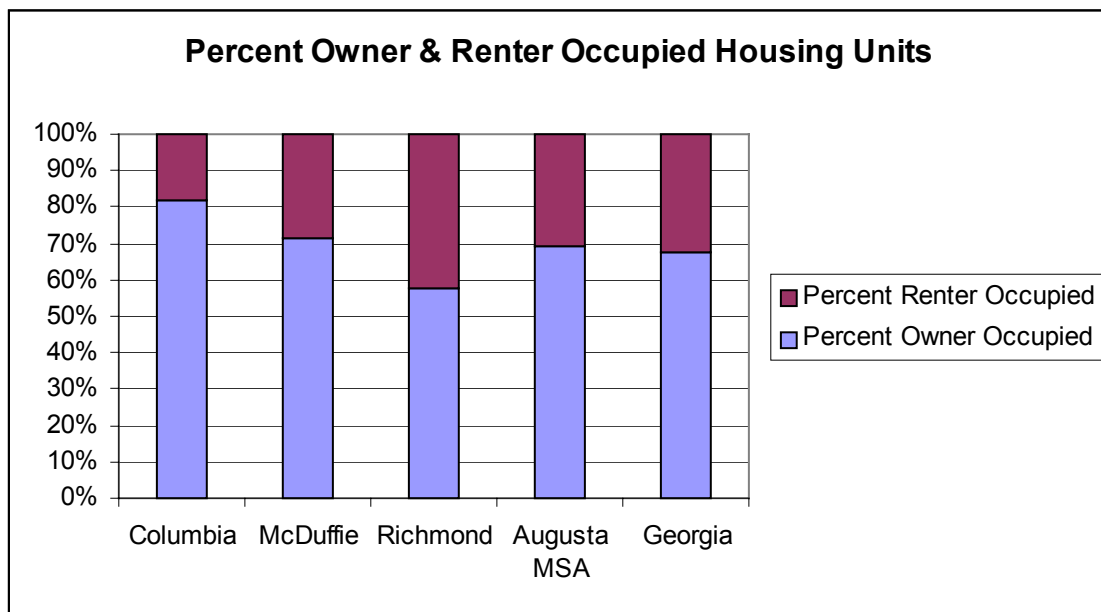
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public housing complexes in the former city. Until the 1980s, owner-occupancy had been steadily increasing in the County. The construction of several apartment complexes during the 1980s pushed the percentage of renter-occupied units up. Table H-4 summarizes current housing tenure in Richmond County and the three cities.

Table H-4 Housing Tenure, 2000 Richmond County, Augusta, Hephzibah and Blythe								
	Richmond Co.		Augusta		Hephzibah		Blythe	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Owner Occupied	42,840	58.0%	41,563	57.5%	1,088	79.2%	190	79.2%
Renter Occupied	31,080	42.0%	30,744	42.5%	286	20.8%	50	20.8%
Total Occupied	73,920	100.0%	72,307	100.0%	1,374	100.0%	240	100.0%
Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, SF 1, 2000								

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The chart below compares the percentage of owner and renter-occupied housing units in Richmond County with those for Columbia and McDuffie Counties, the Augusta MSA, and the state of Georgia. Historically, Augusta-Richmond County has had a relatively high percentage of rental housing due in part to the presence of Fort Gordon, medical facilities, education institutions and manufacturing plants. Construction projects at major facilities in the region, such as the Savannah River Site, Plant Vogtle, Fort Gordon, and Clarks Hill (now Thurmond) Dam, also contribute to the rental housing market.



3.4 Vacant Housing Units

In 2000, 8,392 (10.2%) of Richmond County's housing units were vacant. Of the total vacant units, 8,174 (97.4%) were located in Augusta. The 10.2% vacancy rate is lower than the 11.1% vacancy rate recorded at the time of the 1990 census, but higher than the 8.2% rate in 1980. One factor that contributed to the decline in the vacancy rate is that fewer apartment units were constructed during the 1990s than in the 1980s.

Table H-5 shows the status of all vacant housing units in Augusta, Richmond and Columbia Counties, and Georgia in 2000. Not surprisingly, the Augusta and Richmond County figures are very similar. Augusta and Richmond County (both 63.5%) and Columbia County (64.7%) had higher percentages of vacant housing units either for sale or rent, or already sold or rented but not yet occupied, than the state of Georgia (53.0%).

Table H-5 Housing Vacancy Status, 2000 Augusta, Richmond and Columbia County, and Georgia								
	Augusta		Richmond County		Columbia County		Georgia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
For Rent	3,644	44.6%	3,739	44.6%	560	25.4%	86,905	31.6%
For Sale Only	1,124	13.8%	1,160	13.8%	760	34.5%	38,440	14.0%
Rented or Sold, but Not Occupied	419	5.1%	429	5.1%	106	4.8%	20,353	7.4%
Seasonal or Recreational Use	280	3.4%	288	3.4%	338	15.4%	50,064	18.2%
For Migrant Workers	5	0.1%	5	0.1%	2	0.1	969	0.4%
Other Vacant	2,702	33.1%	2,771	33.1%	435	19.8%	78,637	28.6%
Total Vacant Units	8,174	100.0%	8,392	100.0%	2,201	100.0%	275,368	100.0%
Owner Vacancy Rate		2.6%		2.6%		2.9%		1.9%
Renter Vacancy Rate		10.7%		10.7%		9.1%		8.2%
Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, SF 1, 2000								

Owner and renter vacancy rates were also higher locally than statewide. These are indicators that the local economy is lagging behind statewide growth levels.

3.5 Age of Housing

The age of Augusta and Richmond County's housing stock reflects the comparatively rapid growth that took place in the three decades or so after World War II, and the slower expansion of the last two decades. Table H-6 indicates that over half (51.6%) of the housing units were constructed between 1950 and 1979. Another 19% of the units were constructed between 1980 and 1989, but only about 7.5% have been constructed in the

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last ten years or so. The remaining 14% were built in 1949 or earlier. Generally speaking, the majority of the units that are fifty years or older are concentrated in neighborhoods located in the northeast part of the city (see additional discussion in the Historic Resources Element).

Table H-6 Year Structure Built, 2000 Augusta, Hephzibah, Blythe and Richmond County								
	Augusta		Hephzibah		Blythe		Richmond County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Built 1999 to March 2000	1,182	1.5%	44	3.2%	18	6.6%	1,244	1.5%
1995 to 1998	4,739	5.9%	185	13.3%	43	15.8%	4,967	6.0%
1990 to 1994	6,188	7.7%	218	15.6%	33	12.1%	6,439	7.8%
1980 to 1989	15,213	18.9%	351	25.2%	52	19.0%	15,616	19.0%
1970 to 1979	16,813	20.8%	302	21.7%	25	9.2%	17,140	20.8%
1960 to 1969	13,602	16.9%	132	9.5%	30	11.0%	13,764	16.7%
1950 to 1959	11,488	14.2%	80	5.7%	21	7.7%	11,589	14.1%
1940 to 1949	5,275	6.5%	10	0.7%	15	5.5%	5,300	6.4%
1939 or earlier	6,146	7.6%	71	5.1%	36	13.2%	6,253	7.6%
Total	80,646	100.0%	1,393	100.0%	273	100.0%	82,312	100.0%
Source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data, Table H34								

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Table H-7 provides further evidence of the relative age of the housing stock in Augusta and Richmond County. The table lists 1972 as the median year for all housing units built in Augusta. This means that half were built before 1972 and half were built after. This makes the median age of housing in Augusta older than the housing in Hephzibah, Blythe, Columbia County, McDuffie County and the State.

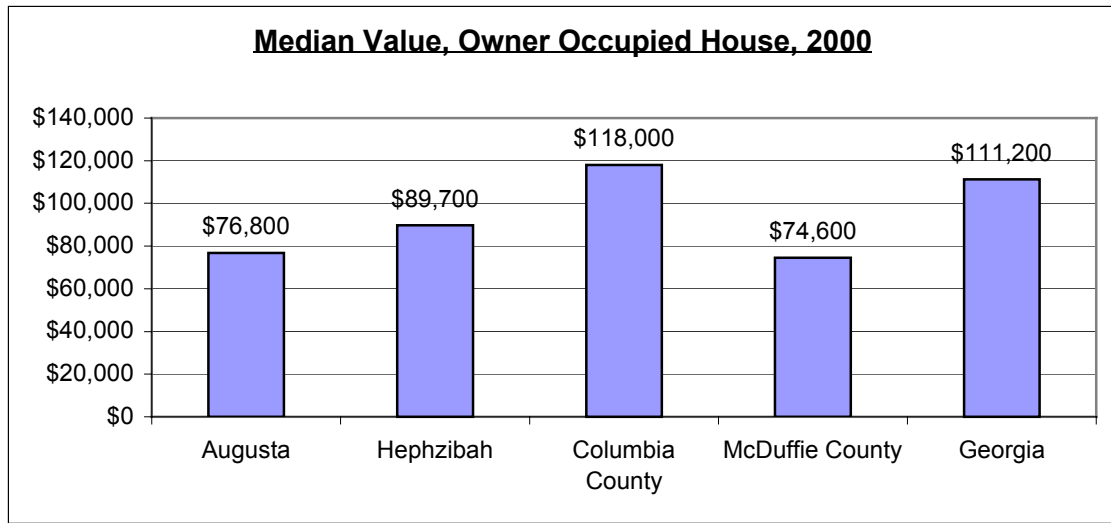
Table H-7	
Median Year Structure Built	
	<u>Year</u>
Augusta & Richmond Co.	1972
Hephzibah	1983
Blythe	1982
Columbia County	1986
McDuffie County	1977
Georgia	1980
Source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data, Table H35	

3.6 Housing Cost

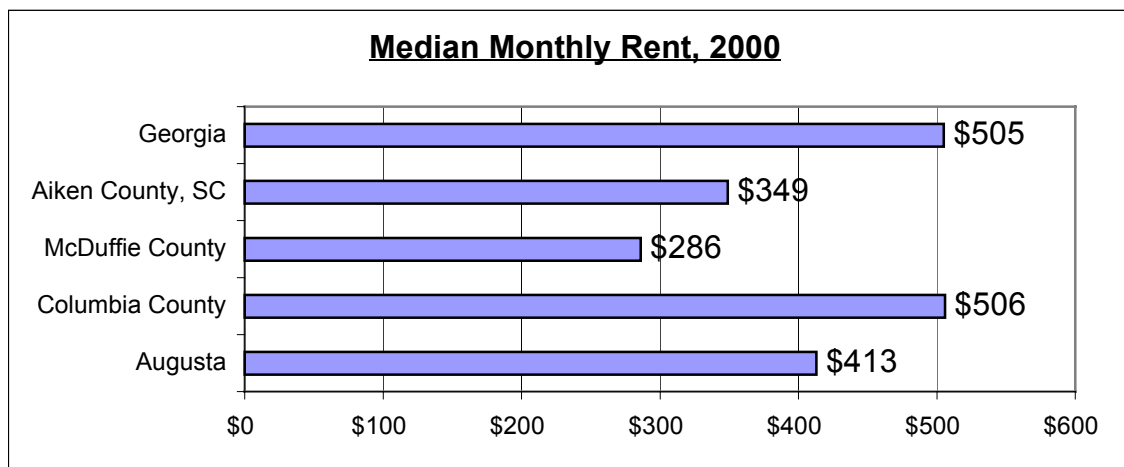
The cost of housing in Augusta, both owner and renter, has increased steadily over the decades. Even with the increase, the cost of housing remains lower than regional and state levels and contributes to the area's lower than average cost of living index.

The median value of an owner-occupied housing unit in Augusta and Richmond County was \$76,800 in the year 2000, up from \$58,500 (Richmond County) in 1990. Almost 38% of the owner units were in the \$60,000 to \$90,000 value range. The chart below shows that the median housing value is relatively low in comparison.

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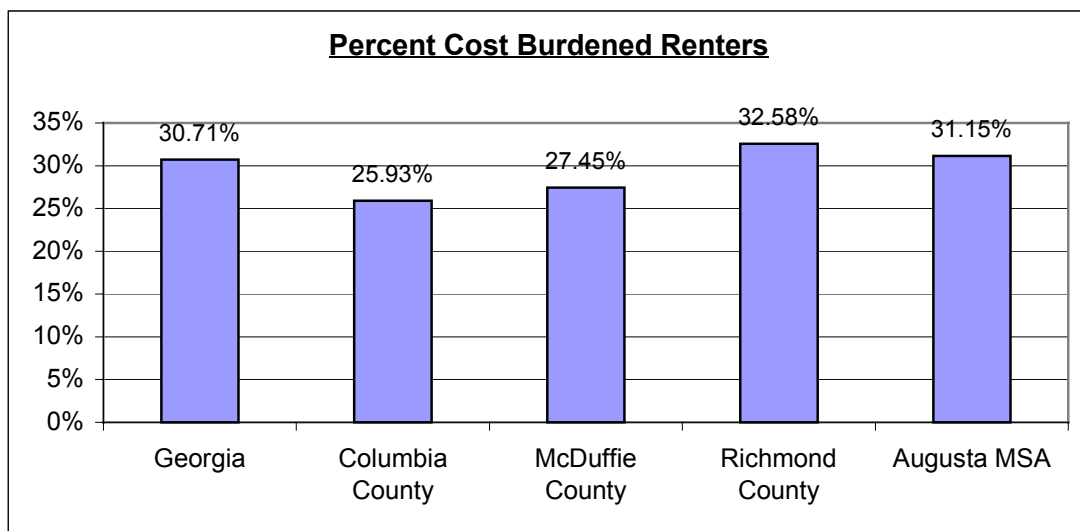
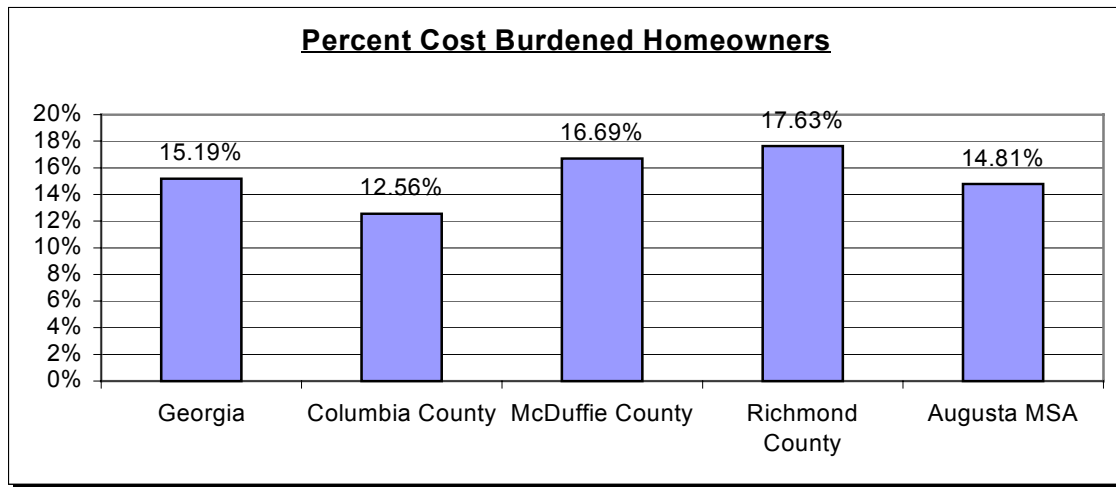
The cost of renting has increased from an average of \$305 per month in 1990 to \$413 in 2000. Nearly 45% of Augusta renters pay between \$350 and \$550 per month for rent. The chart below shows that the median monthly rent in Augusta is lower than in Columbia County and the state, but higher than in McDuffie County and Aiken County, South Carolina.



In spite of the fact that housing value and monthly rent in the Augusta area is relatively affordable, there are many households that devote a high percentage of their income to housing expenses. Cost-burdened households are defined as those households paying 35% or more of their income for housing. The data indicate that an estimated 17.6% of Richmond County homeowners, and 32.5% of renters, are cost-burdened. Approximately 91% of cost burdened renters had less than \$20,000 in household income. An estimated 5,462 of the 6,407 cost burdened homeowners (85%) have less than \$35,000 in household income. The following charts compare the percentage of cost burdened homeowners and

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renters in Richmond County with those for Columbia County, McDuffie County, Georgia, and the Augusta MSA.



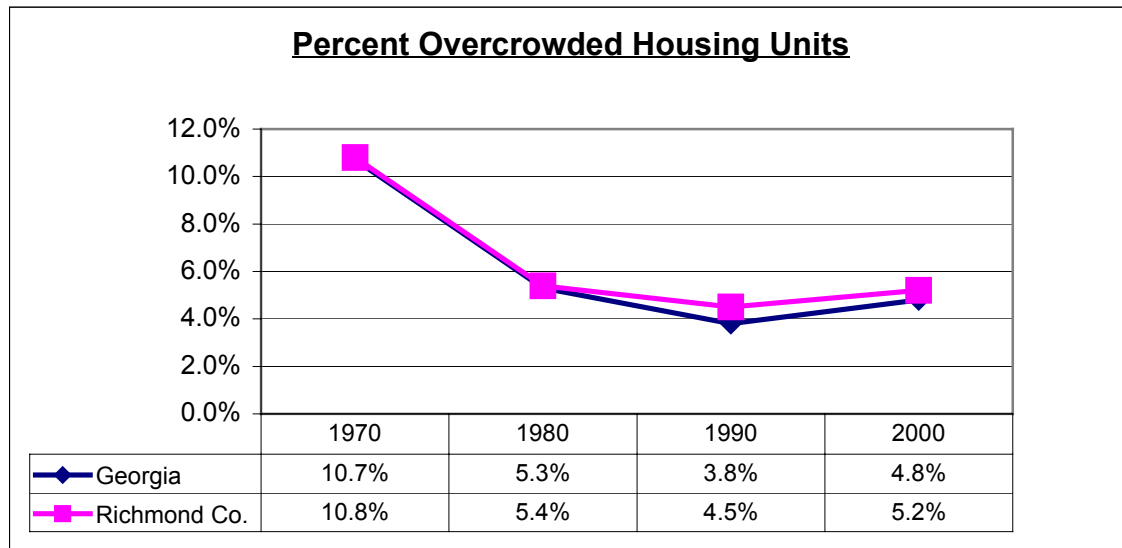
3.7 Housing Conditions

One indicator of housing conditions is the number of units that lack complete plumbing facilities. In 2000, 826 Richmond County housing units lacked complete plumbing facilities. This figure represents approximately 1.0% of the total housing units. This is down slightly from the 932 units (1.6%) lacking complete plumbing in 1990, and significantly below the 5,874 (16.8%) units in 1960.

Another indicator of housing conditions is the number of persons per room in occupied housing units. An occupied housing unit is considered overcrowded if there are more than 1.01 persons per room. At the time of the 2000 census there were 3,844

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overcrowded units in Richmond County, representing 5.2% of all occupied housing units. Renter-occupied units accounted for 72% of all the overcrowded units in Richmond County. The percentage of overcrowded units in 2000 was higher than the 4.5% recorded in 1990. The following chart shows that the percentage of overcrowded units had been declining steadily since 1960.



3.8 Housing for the Homeless

Homelessness is a fact of life for many men, women and children in the Augusta area. Many other individuals and families are in danger of becoming homeless. According to the Continuum of Care Gap Analysis there are not enough beds/units to meet the shelter needs of homeless, individuals and families with children. The Continuum of Care is a community-based planning process that identifies the critical needs of the homeless and develops a strategy to assist them. The table below shows the estimated housing needs of Augusta's homeless, the current inventory and the unmet need. It is obvious that in spite of the efforts of humanitarian organizations, the majority of the housing needs remain unmet.

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Table H-8 Housing Needs of the Homeless, 2002 Augusta, GA			
	Estimated Need	Current Inventory	Unmet Need
Individuals			
Emergency Shelter	301	148	153
Transitional Shelter	175	48	127
Emergency Shelter	875	196	680
Total	1,352	392	960
Families			
Emergency Shelter	100	61	39
Transitional Shelter	250	21	229
Emergency Shelter	400	0	400
Total	750	82	668
Source: Augusta Continuum of Care Gap Analysis, 2002			

The Augusta Task Force for the Homeless (ATFH) is the lead agency in implementing the local homeless assistance strategy. The ATFH is actually a coalition of more than 50 organizations providing housing and services to the homeless. A small, paid staff provides intake and referral services to the homeless on behalf of ATFH member agencies, distributes information, coordinates communications among service providers, and provides administrative support.

Locally, housing for the homeless is provided in the form of emergency shelters, transitional housing and some permanent housing. The Salvation Army (capacity: 80-120) and the Augusta Rescue Mission (capacity: 35) are the two largest emergency shelters. Safe Homes of Augusta, Inc. provides emergency shelter to battered women and their children. Agencies providing transitional housing units include Augusta Urban Ministries, the CSRA Economic Opportunity Authority (EOA), St. Stephen's Ministry, and the Community Mental Health Center. Groups assisted by these agencies include homeless families with children, men and women recovering from substance abuse, AIDS patients, disabled veterans and mentally ill adults. The Community Mental Health Center also provides permanent supportive housing for the homeless. The Supportive Living Program includes 40 supervised apartments, support in daily activities, counseling, and links to other community resources for the homeless.

A variety of support services are offered to the homeless. The Salvation Army provides a soup kitchen, clothing vouchers, an adult literacy program, legal advocacy and referral to Georgia Legal Services, an emergency medical clinic, prescriptions through a local pharmacy, social rehabilitation services, and substance abuse counseling sessions. The EOA supports two clinics providing free health care and operates a Rent Assistance

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Voucher program for homeless individuals and families. The EOA also operates a day shelter for the homeless.

The Golden Harvest Food Bank operates a soup kitchen and a separate food warehouse and distribution center. Catholic Social Services and Augusta Urban Ministries provide food, clothing, household goods, and other assistance to the homeless. The Richmond County Department of Family and Children Services helps the homeless obtain food stamps, welfare benefits, information, and referral services. The Augusta Housing Authority provides Section 8 housing vouchers to the homeless. The Community Mental Health Center also has programs to help clients adjust to living in the community. These programs teach community and support networking, independent living skills, job readiness, and education skills, vocational training, and recreational or leisure skills.

3.9 Housing Production and Programs

As in other communities, housing production in Augusta is largely a private sector activity. A land owner or developer has lots platted in a conventional subdivision format or in some other layout that meets a market need. A builder buys the lots and constructs housing units on each one. In the case of a multi-family development, a contractor builds the apartment complex on behalf of a group of investors. Realtors market the single-family units, while management companies oversee the rental and upkeep of apartment units. Private financial institutions provide construction and permanent financing so that the units can be built, sold and occupied. Repayment of loans to the financial institutions is one source of fresh capital for new loans.

The City of Augusta does provide some housing assistance, primarily for the benefit of low and moderate income persons. The city is an entitlement community under the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. The city receives approximately \$2.9 million in CDBG funds each year. The grant funds are allocated to a variety of housing and related community development activities. The city receives a separate allocation of approximately \$1.4 million from HUD's HOME Investment Partnership Program. The HOME Program is designed to assist in the construction and rehabilitation of housing for low and moderate income persons. Each year the city programs the HOME funds and some CDBG funds to the following housing assistance programs:

- ❑ Housing Rehabilitation - This program provides deferred and low-interest loans to finance repairs to substandard single-family residences, emergency grants to correct dangerous or hazardous conditions in single-family residences, and free paint for use on the exterior of residences.
- ❑ Rental Rehabilitation - This program provides assistance to investors-owners to rehabilitate rental units for occupancy by low and moderate income households.

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- ❑ Downpayment Assistance - This program provides downpayment assistance to qualified low and moderate income households purchasing a home for the first time.
- ❑ Demolition - Rebuild - This program funds the construction or reconstruction of new homes for low and moderate income households occupying severely deteriorated units.
- ❑ Code Enforcement - This program finances code enforcement activities by the City's License and Inspection Department in neighborhoods with high concentration of deteriorated structures.
- ❑ Demolition and Clearance - This program finances the demolition and clearance of deteriorated structures. After clearance the vacant lots are made available to private companies and Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs) for the construction of affordable housing for low and moderate income households.

In recent years the City has allocated CDBG and HOME funds to non-profit organizations for the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing in targeted neighborhoods. Several of the non-profits have been organized in response to an increased emphasis on neighborhood-based solutions to housing and community development needs. Other non-profits reflect outreach by churches located in some of the City's most distressed neighborhoods. The non-profit organizations include the following:

- ❑ Augusta Neighborhood Improvement Corporation
- ❑ 30901 Development Corporation
- ❑ Laney-Walker Development Corporation
- ❑ Antioch Ministries Community Development Corporation
- ❑ East Augusta Community Development Corporation
- ❑ Sand Hills Neighborhood Association
- ❑ Promised Land Community Development Corporation

In addition to housing programs, the city uses CDBG funds to finance public facilities, economic development and public services benefiting low and moderate income households. Public facilities constructed in recent years include Fire Station #5 in the Bethlehem neighborhood and a community center at East Augusta Park. Prior to consolidation the former County used CDBG grant awards to construct the Mental Retardation Service Center, the Savannah Place Multipurpose Center and the Belle Terrace (now Henry Brigham) Senior Center.

3.10 Public Housing

The Housing Authority of Augusta and Richmond County is the designated Local Public Housing Agency (PHA). Established in 1937, the Housing Authority is governed by a

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five-member Board of Commissioners appointed by the mayor of Augusta. An Executive Director and staff of employees oversee the day-to-day operations of the housing Authority and its properties. The Housing Authority currently operates and maintains fourteen (14) properties in Augusta-Richmond County. Together, these properties house approximately 6,800 people in 2,777 living units. Another 6,122 people are assisted through the Section 8 Housing Assistance payment Program. The annual budget for the Housing Authority exceeds \$20 million and includes expenditures to operate and maintain the public housing projects, provide housing assistance payments to Section 8 program participants, make capital improvements, provide security and other community services, and overall administration of the program.

3.11 Summary of Housing Needs

Projections indicate a need for an additional 11,000 housing units in Augusta over the next 20 years or so. The split among types of units (i.e. 1-unit detached, 1-unit attached, apartments, manufactured homes, etc.) is anticipated to remain about the same as it is now. The private sector alone will construct the majority of these new units in a variety of price ranges. However, the local government, private sector and non-profit organizations will also be involved in providing housing, especially for households sensitive to cost and affordability. Many such partnerships are already in place and providing new and rehabilitated housing units for such households. Developing mixed-income neighborhoods is the goal as additional housing is constructed.

Census data, field surveys, and input from the public and interest groups reveal a number of housing problems and needs. Lack of routine maintenance and repair work is evidence of the need for limited and moderate rehabilitation. There is a particularly high concentration of older, substandard housing units within neighborhoods in the former city of Augusta. Smaller pockets of deteriorating units are located in almost all of the neighborhoods. Still other housing units are abandoned, dilapidated, and used for criminal activities. These units need to be dealt with either through code enforcement or total reconstruction. Where dilapidated units have been removed, the resulting vacant lots have become blighting influences on neighborhoods. The vacant lots represent opportunities for construction of new housing.

Standard rental and owner units are available throughout the community, but cannot be accessed by those in need of better housing because they lack the necessary income, financing, or credit history. The high cost of housing has made it necessary for an increasing number of Augusta-Richmond County families to turn to manufactured housing and low-cost rental units as the housing of choice. Some renters are paying excessive amounts of their income for shelter, and others cannot afford the downpayment or other costs related to purchasing a home. These conditions and trends are all indicators of the need for the construction of more affordable housing, and the provision of more rental subsidies and downpayment assistance.

Based on input received at the public meetings and from homeless assistance providers, the homeless have a need for emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent

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supportive housing, and permanent housing. Emergency shelters in the community are able to handle a high percentage of the homeless population, but there is an ongoing need to expand these facilities to meet increasing demand. Additional transitional housing is needed to take some of the burden off of the emergency shelters, and to help more of the homeless take an initial step towards moving into permanent housing. Permanent supportive housing is also needed, particularly for people with mental and physical disabilities.